

NJMC NEWS RELEASE

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**New Jersey
Meadowlands
Commission**

NJMC to Unveil Plan to Expand and Enhance Emergency Warning System

LYNDHURST, N.J. – The New Jersey Meadowlands Commission will consider steps at its Wednesday, April 28 meeting to further assist Meadowlands District Municipalities prepare for flooding and other emergencies by expanding its high-tech, Web-based early warning system to include real time text message alerts for emergency responders, local officials and the general public.

If the plan is approved by Commissioners, the text message alerts would augment the NJMC's free, early warning e-mail system that provides critical information 24/7 to first responders regarding flooding scenarios, tide gate operations, water quality and other metrics collected by the NJMC's scientific arm, the Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute. The early warning service is in keeping with Gov. Christie's efforts to promote shared services to help reduce local government costs.

"Implementing a cell phone alert system would complement the existing e-mail warning system and greatly expand the ability of emergency officials and others to obtain critical information in real time," said Lori Grifa, Acting Chairman of the NJMC and Acting Commissioner of the state Department of Community Affairs. "This initiative would advance the NJMC's ongoing efforts to provide valuable services to District communities at no cost to taxpayers."

Subscribers to the text message system would choose from a list of specific warnings, tailored to their location, from an online menu. For example, an official in Rutherford could choose to receive text alerts relaying the conditions of tide gates that protect Route 17 from flooding while a Moonachie first responder might request alerts about possible flooding scenarios involving Berry's Creek.

Flooding, tide gate and water quality data is monitored daily by MERI's scientific staff. State-of-the art data collection instruments stationed at tide gates, in the marshes and in the Hackensack River relay information to MERI computers via satellite. The text message alerts would be sent from a secure, out-of-state data

management facility to help guard against any service interruptions caused by loss of power or cell phone outages on the East Coast.

During last month's heavy rains, MERI data accurately predicted flooding severity at locations throughout the Meadowlands District, allowing local officials to prepare ahead of time for storm surges. In addition to e-mail and text alerts, MERI's Geographic Information Systems team offers Web-based digital flood maps for each Meadowlands District Municipality. These online maps, which are accessible to the public, show exactly what streets and properties – down to the block and lot number – would flood during a 2-foot, 4-foot, 6-foot or 8 feet and higher storm surge.

The GIS team also provides online interactive municipal and emergency response maps that contain layers of data that can help first responders better prepare for and combat emergencies. For example, the maps include fire hydrant locations and pinpoint which buildings in a town hold hazardous materials. Since 2003 the NJMC has spent \$2.9 million developing MERI's interactive maps and early warning alert systems.

“The NJMC's emergency alert program and digital maps are a great example of the Commission's dedication to assisting District towns without burdening taxpayers,” said Robert Ceberio, the NJMC's executive director. “This modern technology can play an important role in helping local officials and first responders keep their residents safe and secure.”

To view MERI's interactive municipal, flood and emergency response maps, go to <http://meri.njmeadowlands.gov> and click on “Interactive Maps” under the “Popular Content” section on the left side of the page.

To see tide-gate information, go to www.tidemonitor.com/aqua/dashboard.html.

The Meadowlands District covers parts of 14 towns in Bergen and Hudson counties. District Municipalities include Carlstadt, East Rutherford, Little Ferry, Lyndhurst, Moonachie, North Arlington, Ridgefield, Rutherford, South Hackensack and Teterboro in Bergen County, and Jersey City, Kearny, North Bergen and Secaucus in Hudson County.

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